

## CLAIMS

- 1    1. In a network comprising a content server and a plurality of connected user  
2    terminals, a method for delivering content comprising a storyline for an electronic game  
3    to at least one user, the method comprising:
  - 4                 deconstructing the storyline into a plurality of episodes;
  - 5                 implementing an episode into an episodic game module; and
  - 6                 transmitting the episodic game module to at least one user terminal.
  
- 1    2. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
  - 2                 scheduling intervals for generation and transmission of episodic game  
3                 modules.
  
- 1    3. The method of claim 2, further comprising:
  - 2                 responsive to a technological improvement occurring during a first part of  
3                 an interval for generation and transmission of an episodic game  
4                 module, incorporating the technological improvement into the  
5                 episodic game module scheduled for generation and transmission  
6                 for that interval.
  
- 1    4. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
  - 2                 responsive to a technological improvement occurring during  
3                 implementation of an episode, incorporating the technological  
4                 improvement into the episodic game module scheduled for  
5                 generation and transmission for that interval.
  
- 1    5. The method of claim 2 further comprising:

2 responsive to a real world event occurring related to the storyline of the  
3 game during an interval, incorporating the event into the episodic  
4 game module scheduled for generation and transmission for that  
5 interval.

1 6. The method of claim 1 wherein generating episodic game modules further  
2 comprises:

3 generating a technology module and content module for each episodic  
4 game module to allow modification of the technology module  
5 without requiring modification of the content of an episodic game  
6 module.

1 7. In a network comprising a content server and a plurality of connected user  
2 terminals, a method for delivering content comprising a storyline for an electronic game  
3 to at least one user comprising:  
4 constructing a plurality of episodes to relate the storyline;  
5 implementing an episode into a game module; and  
6 transmitting the episodic game module to at least one user terminal.

1 8. The method of claim 7 wherein an episodic game module is transmitted at  
2 periodically scheduled intervals.

1 9. The method of claim 8 wherein the episodic game modules are transmitted  
2 monthly.

1 10. A method of providing an Internet-enabled game comprising:

2 receiving information regarding a user's current state in the game; and  
3 responsive to the current state, enabling episodic content to be accessed by  
4 a user.

1 11. The method of claim 10 further comprising:  
2 responsive to the current state, transmitting a voice mail message related  
3 to the user.

1 12. The method of claim 10 further comprising:  
2 responsive to the current state, transmitting a voice mail message related  
3 to the user.

1 13. The method of claim 10 further comprising:  
2 responsive to the current state, transmitting a pager message related to  
3 the user.

1 14. The method of claim 10 further comprising:  
2 receiving a search request from a user; and  
3 responsive to the current state of the user in the game, transmitting search  
4 results to the user.

1 15. The method of claim 14 wherein the search results are game-related responsive to  
2 the search request being game-related and the current state of the user indicating that the  
3 user is permitted to receive game-related search results.

1    16.    The method of claim 15 wherein the search results are not game-related  
2    responsive to the current state of the user indicating that the user is not permitted to  
3    receive game-related search results responsive to the search term entered by the user.

1    17.    The method of claim 10 wherein current state information comprises a  
2    notification from an application module resident on a user's terminal that the user has  
3    accessed a web page.

1    18.    The method of claim 10 wherein current state information comprises a user  
2    action.

1    19.    The method of claim 18 wherein the user action is calling a predefined telephone  
2    number.

1    20.    The method of claim 18 wherein the user action is accessing a predetermined web  
2    site.

1    21.    The method of claim 18 wherein the user action is requesting a specific search  
2    term.

1    22.    The method of claim 10 wherein episodic content is stored within a third-party  
2    website that is content-related to the storyline, and the users are directed to the web-site  
3    to discover the episodic content.

1    23.    The method of claim 22 episodic content is placed on a third party web site for  
2    compensation related to user traffic to the web site related to users searching for the  
3    episodic content.

1    24.    The method of claim 10 wherein an episode is made available responsive to  
2    determining whether a user has submitted payment for the episode.

1    25.    An apparatus for delivering episodic content comprising:  
2                 a content server for storing a plurality of episodic gaming modules to  
3                 which user terminals may have access responsive to receiving  
4                 authorization, the episodic gaming modules having a related  
5                 storyline, and in which authorization is granted to access the  
6                 episodic gaming modules serially.

1    26.    A method of episodically delivering entertainment content to a plurality of users  
2    comprising:  
3                 delivering an initial episode of content, wherein the initial episode  
4                 comprises an initial set of technology for enabling an initial  
5                 episode of content; and  
6                 delivering subsequent episodes at periodically scheduled intervals to at  
7                 least one user.

1    27.    The method of claim 26 further comprising:  
2                 obtaining an e-mail address from a user; and  
3                 delivering information related to the entertainment content to the obtained  
4                 e-mail address.

1    28.    The method of claim 26 further comprising:  
2                 providing an e-mail address to a user; and

3                   delivering information related to the entertainment content to the provided  
4                   address.

1       29.     The method of claim 26 further comprising:  
2                   placing information relevant to content of the episode on a web site  
3                   maintained by a third party; and wherein the information  
4                   comprises a request that the user access the web site to find the  
5                   relevant information.

1       30.     The method of claim 26 comprising:  
2                   identifying a relevant current event news story; and  
3                   transmitting information regarding the current event news story to at least  
4                   one user to provide additional information related to the episode  
5                   content.

1       31.     The method of claim 26 further comprising:  
2                   determining a link to a web site containing the news story; and wherein  
3                   transmitting information comprises transmitting link information to  
4                   the web site containing the news story to at least one user.

1       32.     The method of claim 30 further comprising:  
2                   creating a false news story related to the identified news story, wherein the  
3                   false news story links the content of the episode to the identified  
4                   news story.

1       33.     The method of claim 32 further comprising:

2 publishing the false news story on a web site maintained by a developer of  
3 the entertainment content.

1 34. The method of claim 26 further comprising:  
2 sending a message to a user's voice mail box, wherein the message is  
3 related to the entertainment content.

1 35. The method of claim 34 further comprising the step of:  
2 providing a user with a voice mail box.

1 36. The method of claim 34 wherein sending message further comprises sending a  
2 message to the user's voice mail wherein the message is represented to be from a  
3 character in the entertainment content.

1 37. The method of claim 26 further comprising:  
2 obtaining a facsimile number from a user; and  
3 transmitting information relating to the entertainment content to the  
4 obtained facsimile number.

1 38. The method of claim 26 further comprising:  
2 providing a facsimile number from a user; and  
3 transmitting information relating to the entertainment content to the  
4 providing facsimile number.

1 39. The method of claim 26 wherein new technology is used to implement an episode,  
2 further comprising:

3                   incrementally delivering data related to enabling the new technology as  
4                   part of a plurality of episodes to a user.

1   40.   The method of claim 26 wherein an episode requires a video file to be played by a  
2   user, further comprising:

3                   incrementally delivering data comprising the video file as part of a  
4                   plurality of episodes to a user.

1   41.   The method of claim 26 wherein an application developer implements the  
2   episodes delivered to the users using technology from at least one third-party vendor, and  
3   the third-party vendor updates the technology delivered to the users without participation  
4   of the application developer.

1   42.   In a network comprising a content server and a plurality of connected user  
2   terminals, a method for delivering content comprising a storyline for an electronic game  
3   to at least one user, the method comprising:

4                   deconstructing the storyline into a plurality of episodes;  
5                   implementing an episode into a sequence of episodic game modules; and  
6                   periodically transmitting to one of the episodic game modules to at least  
7                   one user terminal.

1   43.   In a network comprising a content server and a plurality of connected user  
2   terminals, a method for delivering content comprising a storyline for an electronic game  
3   to at least one user, the method comprising:

4                   deconstructing the storyline into a plurality of episodes;  
5                   implementing an episode into an episodic game module; and

6                   periodically permitting access to one of the episodic game modules by at  
7                   least one user terminal.

1       44.     In a network comprising a content server and a plurality of connected user  
2     terminals, a method for providing entertainment content comprising a storyline for an  
3     electronic game to at least one user, comprising:  
4                   receiving a request from a user to gain access to an episode of the  
5                   electronic game; and  
6                   delivering an episode of the electronic game to the user.

1       45.     The method of claim 44 further comprising:  
2                   receiving an access code from a user to gain access to an episode of  
3                   entertainment content;  
4                   verifying validity of the access code; and  
5                   responsive to the access code being validated, allowing access to the  
6                   episode of entertainment content.

1       46.     The method of claim 44 further comprising:  
2                   determining a date for the request received from the user; and  
3                   permitting access to the requested episode responsive to the determined  
4                   date being within a permitted window for delivery.